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Chancellor Messages_Our Continued Commitment to UMS Employees

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UMS Community Guidance

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- Travel Assistance Hotline for UMS Employees and Students
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- Governor Mills Convenes Coronavirus Response Team
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- Travel Monitoring and Prohibitions: University Travel to Italy Prohibited
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- We're Making Plans to be Ready for Coronavirus
February 28, 2020

Chancellor Malloy: Our Continued Commitment to UMS Employees

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UMS Colleagues –

I made a special commitment to all of our regular employees on March 19: that they would receive full pay through at least April 4, even if UMS did not have full-time work for them, or even if they were unable to work full-time or at all, due to the disruptions we're all facing together in the COVID-19 crisis and pandemic. We were also able to continue our regular student employees' pay for the same time, and work study students have been guaranteed their usual pay through the academic term through that federal program.

Now, with COVID-19 pandemic disruptions continuing, we're extending our remote work operations at least through May 17, and I know the many disruptions in your lives continue too. You have my most sincere admiration and appreciation for how hard you are working for UMS and your families, and we want to keep working that hard for you too.

Therefore, I want you to know that UMS will continue its commitment to our employees at least through June 30 — no employee will face involuntary layoff or loss of the opportunity for some form of income replacement with regular benefits through that time due to COVID-19 disruptions. Most employees without work or unable to fully work for COVID-19 reasons will be able to choose between a voluntary furlough, with UMS health benefits and state and federal unemployment benefits to replace your income, or leave with regular pay covered by UMS sick, vacation, and comp time leave banks.

I'll be hosting a virtual discussion later today with some members of our HR team to talk about our plans and commitment to you. We will share a link to the conversation and an FAQ document for you this afternoon.

Unless an alternative arrangement is already in place for you with your supervisor, please plan to start next week just as you have finished this week.

As you might imagine, there's a lot of detail to understand here — too much for this message — and each employee's situation will be different. Our HR partners will provide all of the details to help you understand the best situation for you and your supervisor in the circumstances. But I do want to briefly summarize how our plans will work.

We will provide flexibility for employees and supervisors to find sensible solutions for those without work to do because of our operational changes and for those who are personally impacted by COVID-19, whether from a need to attend to their own health or potential exposure, care for a loved one, or manage a change in child care arrangements.

We will provide this flexibility through an expanded use of sick and vacation leave to supplement paid sick leave and paid expanded family and medical leave benefits available to employees from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, a new law recently passed by Congress. Most bargaining unit employees and non-represented employees who experience a full or partial reduction of work hours because of UMS operational changes may also choose a full or partial voluntary furlough through June 30, with continued UMS benefits and state and expanded federal unemployment benefits that will likely fully replace regular income.

UMS employees who elect a voluntary furlough may also elect to maintain their benefits. Everyone who is currently enrolled in our benefits programs can continue to receive coverage regardless of the work and pay solution they choose. Employee premium rates will be allowed to go into arrears for individuals who are unable to make employee contributions with repayment on return to work.

And we will continue our commitment to our non-federal work study students as well — they will continue to receive pay through May 2.

While the financial strain we are facing as a System in the pandemic is very real, and significant, this commitment through June 30 represents our best effort to make full use of the new federal benefits, our own work leave banks and benefit programs, and even state unemployment benefits in various combinations to manage COVID-19 disruptions to provide either work or income replacement options through the end of June and our current fiscal year. We will address the realities of the next fiscal year as they become more clear. In the meantime, I want to specifically thank our HR team across the System and our bargaining unit partners for bringing the various elements of this commitment together. I couldn't be prouder of them, and you.

To say these are challenging times is an understatement. We'll get through them together, and I hope this new commitment to you through June helps to relieve some of the anxiety that we are all facing in the midst of the pandemic. And if you need it, please don't forget that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) remains a free resource for you and your families at myCigna.com or 1-877-622-4327.

Let's keep working together.

Sincerely,

Dannel P. Malloy

Chancellor